

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7851

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR UR IS XF SY

SUBJECTAC ASAD VISIT TO USSR

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET-SYRIAN TALKS ENDED APRIL 12 WITH APPARENT AGREEMENT ON NEW ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL, CULTURAL, AND MILITARY AGREEMENTS. DIFFERENCES IN TONE OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, SUGGEST THAT SYRIANS, WITH AN EYE TO THE TALKS IN WASHINGTON, REMAIN STANDOFFISH TO SOVIET WARNINGS NOT TO PUT MUCH FAITH IN U.S. LUNCHEON SPEECH BY PODGORNIY APRIL 12 WARNED THAT PRESENT
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ME SITUATION REQUIRES VIGILANCE AGAINST PLOTS OF IMPERIALISTS

AND REACTIONARIES AND ABILITY TO DISTINGUISH FRIENDS FROM ENEMIES. ASAD CONFINED SPEECH TO GENERALITIES AND TO DECLARATION THAT SOVIET AND SYRIAN SIDES AGREE ON MAJOR ISSUES. ON ISRAELI SITUATION PRAVDA COMMENTARY VOICES CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE ASCENDENCY OF LIKUD BLOC. END SUMMARY

2. PRAVDA (APRIL 13) REPORTS CONCLUSION OF SOVIET-SYRIAN TALKS. ARTICLE SAYS TALKS EMPHASIZED BILATERAL RELATIONS AND ME AND TOOK PLACE IN SPIRIT OF WARMTH AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. PRAVDA ACCOUNT OF TALKS BLAMED ISRAELI RULING CIRCLES "AND FOREIGN FORCES SUPPORTING THEM" FOR ME TENSION. ADAD TODAY (APRIL 13) RECEIVING UNUSUALLY MASSIVE POLITBURO ATTENDANCE AT BOTH LUNCHEES IS ANOTHER SIGN OF MAJOR GRAND MOSCOW SEND-OFF FOR TOUR OF SOVIET UNION.

3. AT SYRIAN-HOSTED LUNCHEON APRIL 12 PODGORNIY ANNOUNCED THAT AGREEMENT ON NEW ACCORDS IN ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL, CULTURAL AND OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS" WILL HELP SYRIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION OF CADRES AND WILL STRENGTHEN SYRIAN DEFENSE CAPABILITY. WHILE PODGORNIY DID NOT SPECIFICALLY REPORT NEW AGREEMENT ON DEFENSE, HIS REMARKS INDICATE THAT SOVIETS HAVE AGREED TO SOME NEW DEFENSE COMMITMENTS. (DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO PARTICIPATED IN TALKS.)

4. PODGORNIY'S REMARKS ON ME SITUATION TOOK EVEN STRONGER IMPLIED SWIPE AT U.S. ME ROLE AND EGYPTIANS THAN DID BREZHNEV APRIL 11. HE WARNED THAT PRESENT STATE OF ME STRUGGLE REQUIRES VIGILANCE REGARDING "THE PLOTS OF IMPERIALIST AND REACTIONARY FORCES" AND THE ABILITY "TO DISTINGUISH FRIENDS FROM ENEMIES."

5. ASAD REMARKS, IN CONTRAST, WERE EVEN BLANDER THAN THOSE HE OFFERED APRIL 11. HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT SOVIET-SYRIAN TALKS HAVE FURTHERED BILATERAL FRIENDSHIP. HE ADDED THAT "OUR POINTS OF VIEW ON THE MAIN QUESTIONS COINCIDE" A SUGGESTION THAT THERE WAS SOME DISAGREEMENT DURING TALKS.

6. ON OTHER ME DEVELOPMENTS, PRAVDA (APRIL 13) CARRIES COMMENTARY ON ISRAELI POLITICAL CRISIS BY PERSADA AND REPORT OF STATEMENT BY ISRAELI COMMUNIST LEADER VILNER. BOTH EXPRESS CONCERN THAT LIKUD WILL PROFIT FROM RESIGNATION OF MEIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT. COMMENTARY AND VILNER TAKE STANDARD LINE THAT PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS INDICATES BANKRUPTCY OF ISRAEL'S "AGGRESSIVE POLICY". HOWEVER, THEY TAKE PAINS TO NOTE THAT LIKUD BLOC REPRESENTS EXTREMIST POSITION AND THEY CALL FOR CHANGE IN ISRAELI POLICY AND FOR UNITY TO PREVENT LIKUD FROM TAKING ROLE IN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE STRUCK BY CONTRAST IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF

ASAD AND SOVIETS IN LAST TWO DAYS. ASAD, WHILE TAKING EXPECTED TOUGH LINE ON ISRAEL, HAD AVOIDED INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC ON IMPERIALIST PLOTS AND "ERSATZ PLANS" WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED SOVIET SPEECHES. SYRIANS, WITH DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON, MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO PULL THEIR PUNCHES. SHARPER SOVIET RHETORIC SEEMS TO ILLUSTRATE EXTENT OF SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT SYRIAN DEALINGS WITH U.S. REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW MUCH INFLUENCE SOVIETS CAN BUY IN DAMASCUS WITH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID, AND HOW MUCH THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY.

8. IN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT, ZNAIYE SOCIETY CANCELLED A ME LECTURE SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 12. LECTURE RESCHEDULED FOR APRIL 18 -- PRESUMABLY TO ALLOW DUST TO SETTLE FROM SYRIAN VISITS TO MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON.
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